

ST. ANDREWS COLLEGE PRESS

Gravity Hill
magazine

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COURTNEY BUTLER, Editor

Volume Three

SPRING 2007

ST. ANDREW'S COLLEGE PRESS

Laurinburg, North Carolina

EDWIN FARRELL, Assistant Editor

DAVID BELL, Advisor

Cover Art :

ENTRANCE

Antique Photograph by J.A.W. Schroeter

Ha! Time enough for the earth in the grave.

~The Wizard, Conan the Barbarian

This is the third edition of the St. Andrew's literary magazine, *Gravity Hill*. I am very proud to have been a part of this wonderful and unique vision. *Gravity Hill* is intended to showcase the work of students alongside the work of faculty, staff, alumni and outside contributors. This has been an extremely challenging, encouraging and inspiring experience for me. I would like to thank Caitlin Johnson, Mason Tate, Ian Pratt, Ian Burkett and Joe Schroeter for their help sifting through the initial inundation of submissions. I would also like to thank Edwin Farrell, Assistant Editor, and our advisor, David Bell, for their continual humor and support.

I would like to thank the St. Andrew's Press itself for being an exceedingly unnerving office to work in. To the ghosts and ghouls who animate and occupy this space, thanks for the good time! You are always welcome. I would also like to thank Melissa and Gary in the Communications Office, and Molly McCaffrey for their unending patience. Congratulations to the students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members who have graced this work with their wonderful gifts. May the integrity and endurance of the St. Andrew's Press continue to produce and sustain writers of the future. Cheers!

Courtney Alyssa Butler

EDITOR

Cam Abernathy

(Tanka)

A crow sits on top
The winded branches of time
Squawking at the cruel
Feeling the dismal nature
Depressing his primal thought



Tasha Mehne

PARISIAN CAFE
Photograph

Peggy Anderson

MISTAKES

Correcting subject-verb disagreements
Pronoun-antecedent mismatches
And endless problems with parallelism,
The writing teacher fills margins
With crimsons sentences,
Tightly structured
Grammatically correct
Metaphorically relevant:
Burning up his novel
Over the midnight oil.

Al Bardi

OH MY POCAHONTAS PRINCESS

Navaho heart necklace,
Apache beads,
And crayon tunic,

There are storms:

Great sighs
And souls

That cry that tug
The old ships
From the future

Unstoppable.

ERIC AND THE ICE

Where the hand
Of man stretches

Over layers
Of blood
Slush, whose
Color none now
Know

Here on the ice
Your rib
Intact, back
Never broken
But no blood
Left, even for
Woman and clan

Even for shame

Bones still move
They build they want
But change is

What carves
What lasts

Jan Burkett

(Haibun)

Brother,

with time
the deepest
ice will melt

Christmas day has come and gone, and you have not
called. You are my brother! Why have you not called?

two brothers

crouched behind a dresser

eating oranges

from SNAPSHOTS OF INDIA

reverberations
of will's djembe
and smoke curls
from perry's beedi
linger
in the sultry air
of Chandigarh's evening

ACCORDING TO TRADITION

(Huibun)

Tiny bits of fire leap toward pine branches as sweat beads down his back. It is June in North Carolina. The night is humid, and there is no need, save tradition, for the fires. They add a bit of mysticism, I suppose.

In the fires' light, three Natives dance. Feet pound into the earth, according to tradition, and the drumbeat becomes the heartbeat, as the heartbeat is the drumbeat. He is anxious; I can remember feeling the same.

mosquitoes feed-
shadows dance on a backdrop
of tall, lean pines

This is the time to put down boyish desires, to become a man.

HARVESTING PLUMS WITH JANE

(Tanka)

rickety red ladder
stretched into branches
picking dessert

plums, she said,
are sweetest in the morning

Sara Jean Deegan

NICOLE

I am a dark woman
I rage and spurn burn strike purr reproduce
I live in the underworld
I live naturally in the earth
Decompose my body
I am a breathing thinking thing
Self contained replenishing recycling machine
I know not what I mean
I spit hiss piss kiss curse
Let the Lord do what he wills
Only He can have his way with me

Edwin Farrell

TRAVEL POEM PT. 1

Lull me to sleep as you did
That night I hit my head on the dashboard.
But the night is still young...
Shall we go out tonight?
Shall we drive to the desert
And chase peyote dreams
In the cool desert night?

SETTING SUN

Setting sun sinks to the ground,
In the land where it rises.
The full moon's light shines on Fuji
Come with me to my dream.

TRAVEL POEM PT. 2

...On second thought,
Let us continue to our Final Destination.
And be sure not to take a wrong turn
At Albuquerque.

MY LAMENT FROM THE GOLDEN HALLS

(I remember)

I remember how I would run with my dog
through the woods on barefoot summer mornings.
That is what I call a dog day of a summer.

(Strand)

I remember a strand of spider's silk
that shone in the light of the sun--
Leaves fluttered in the wind.

(Clouds clear)

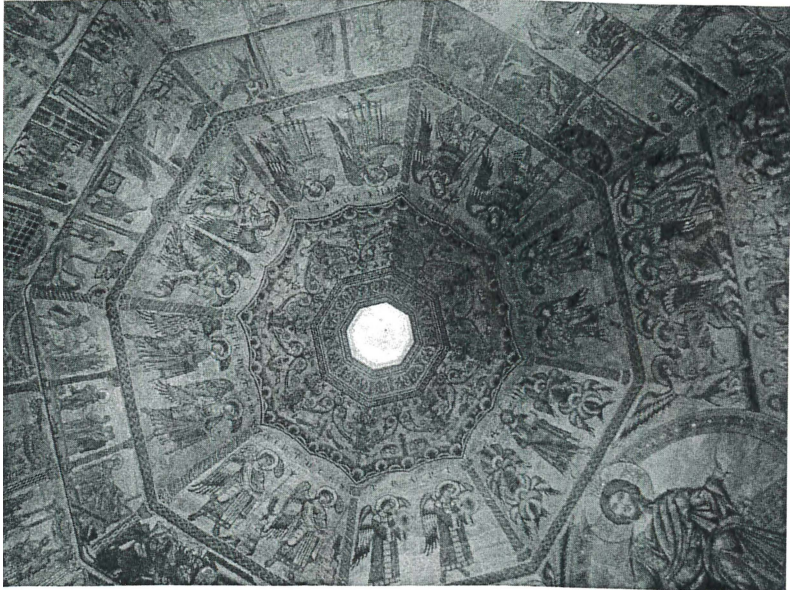
I remember as the clouds cleared from the sky.
The locusts droned at sundown and
high grass was lashed by the wind.

(Greyhound)

I remember a greyhound that fawned in my 11th hour
as she begged for a reward. She won a long fight
with a fox in the yard. Creely threw her a bone and she
wandered off.

(Dead by dawn)

I remember soft moon light, obsidian sky.
Candlelight faded away
in the end of my days as I entered the golden hall up
high.



David Quillin

GOD'S EYE
Photograph

Marie Gilbert

MONET AS POET

Bright blue sky
scoops of cream
over the calm sea

on the board walk
the lady twirls her parasol

her eager face lifts to the light
to the man at her side.

2

The lilies are so beautiful
green leaves, pink blossoms, blue water

one imagines music
where are the bull frogs

3

The nice little man
his shirt and socks so clean and white
could not possibly be the one
who tied the can to the dog's tail
and if he did
he would never
ever do it again

4

Could I row a boat
through the inviting arch
weathered off the cliff
and should I go at high tide or low

if I fear to go today, how long
would that arch
wait for me.

THE PROMISE

Leaves slip and slide
light breeze to pavement shine
comrades dressed in red and gold
ride glory down together

A murmur with the rhythm of the glide:
 We are going home
 home to where we came from
 for new clothes
 to breathe fresh delicate colors
 and return

We promise



David Quillin

PIANO KEYS
Photograph

Sherry Hamby

CHILDREN'S STORIES

Ursula the sea witch impaled on a pole
Lord Farquaad swallowed whole
So too sundry stepmothers most unpleasant
And a dragon lady named Maleficent.

Littlefoot's mom by T. Rex perished
A gunfire blast hit Bambi's mother
Harry's parents met an evil wizard
the jungle king Mufasa, only an evil brother

Who else can die?
My daughter cries
seeking happily ever after

I would live forever

just as a favor to her

FOR MY DEAR NORTHERN FRIENDS

The days must be getting longer
Swans and geese build their nests

Even stubborn snowbanks glisten
Fresh rounded and smoothed in midday sun

Remember
lilacs are real

IN PRAISE OF MY FLAT CHEST

My body has
its own ways
Breasts filled
fed well
my children

Nowadays
I roll over
flat on my stomach
in tranquil
sleep

Carleigh Horvath

24 PACK

The box sits empty and alone on the dirty floor. All of the contents are missing. My friends laugh and the music is ear-piercing loud. The box lays immobile amid the rowdy people. Someone walks on the box, crushing the flimsy cardboard, splattered across the wet, sticky floor. The contents inside make everyone happy and drunk. Dancing, laughing and feeling unlike themselves; they seem to enjoy this feeling over any other. The now empty box used to be powerful; it once enclosed 24 cans of delicious beer, and the answers to everyone's problems. I walk over to this damp, empty and lifeless box and toss it into the garbage. It once again lays motionless, buried underneath its own contents and someone else's vomit.

Caitlin Johnson

ISOBEL

The woods full of ash trees, before the ash trees had been killed off. Everything covered in snow. Late January. The snow would melt away within days, but in that moment it made everything shine. Though that didn't take away from the gruesome scene. Who knows how long it would have been before anyone went back there, if it hadn't occurred to me where she was. We spent so much of our time out there; she loved it there.

Screaming. God, the screaming. Aunt Kelly screaming and me not saying a word, just taking slow, careful steps toward the tree, a towering black walnut. The snow, hard-packed under my feet, made neat, crisp sounds with every move. I inched forward as more and more moisture seeped through my sneakers and into my feet. The wind, hard and silent, cut through me and penetrated me inside because I hadn't bothered with a coat or even a sweatshirt. I had only bothered with car keys and speeding; I wasn't even sure that I had enough gas to make it all the way out there.

Kelly demanding to know why she was risking her life in a car with me when her daughter was missing and me knowing but refusing to say for fear that saying it would make it real, that saying it would kill her whether she was already dead or not. Her last letter laying open on my bedroom floor, carelessly thrown down in a panic. Her rigidly upright handwriting declaring her intentions and offering her apologies. The stamp, 36 cents with a flowery heart for Valentine's Day even though it was weeks off still. Me dropping the rest of the mail in the hallway and my brother giving me a dirty look, but he didn't know. He had just come home,

didn't know that our only cousin was missing, had simply dropped off the earth the day before.

Kelly on the phone, asking with an urgent quavering voice, "Have you seen Isobel?"

When the screaming finally stopped, once Kelly had yelled herself hoarse, she realized that I was still standing there. Staring. Isobel's honey-blond hair falling down her shoulders, spilling over her face. Her lips, now baby blue and thin. Her porcelain skin gently dusted with snow. Her feet, dainty in her black flats, gracefully extending toward the ground. But the rest of her body was limp and overextended from hanging down too long.

Kelly ran to me, making crunching sounds as her feet hit the snow, and grabbed my arm. "Don't look," she told me. "Don't look." My feet refused to move and I couldn't look away. I was completely riveted and didn't care. All Kelly kept saying was "Don't look," but I couldn't help it. Even then, Isobel was completely glamorous.

THIS NEXT TUNE IS "INTERSTATE LOVE SONG"

I exist
From here to there.
Outside these lines and lanes
The colors separate;
I fail.

But along the way
I will not break.
I will not slide.

Jennifer Johnson

ELYSIUM

Dante would have sent me
across the river
into Elysium
but you...
you...
you left me on the
Western Shore.
I am close enough to see
you walk through
the Eastern Gate.
Dante came to his dark place
and now you.
Elysium I could stand,
but not standing on this
Western Shore
with no money
for the boatman.

PIECES

the pieces of poems littered
my living room floor.
I had rent them
letter from letter
word from word
in a flight of desperation.

upon awaking
I stare at the pieces.
what did they ever do to me?
obliged, a proper funeral
was the least I could do.

gathered and packed
a plastic can my makeshift urn
I went out into the world.

in the mountains
a cozy town.
down a hill and then up another.
to my left, an expanse of vineyard
my right, a gorge of chestnut.

I smiled.

the ripped pieces of my dreams
fluttered down
to mingle with grapes and bees
chestnuts and leaves

WINGS

My back itches.
Two spots - upper
left and right
That's where my wings were.

You gave me those wings.

I learned to fly
and I never wanted
to come down.
But I fell.

The wing joints split
blood splattered
Bits of feather and bone
littered my descent
I hit the ground hard
and the wings broke
apart from my back

That's what happens when
you fly
on borrowed wings.

My wings are gone
and so are you.

The itch eventually stops
and my back turns sore.
Slowly, two lumps form -
two spots.

The bones burst through
in a spray of blood.
It burns.
I can move them,
even though each twitch
ignites my every nerve.

But I smile.

These wings will be
much stronger.

These wings are
my own.

REACHING

My world is falling apart
piece by scrapped piece
So is yours
I tried to pick up your pieces
give them back
put them together again
I couldn't
My hands like a leper's
molting flesh, rotting bone
and no muscle to reach
for the pieces
Liquid acid dripped from
my eyes, scoured the
flesh from my face
melting my lips
so
I couldn't even say
I'm sorry.



Tasha Mehne

LOCAL PARISIANS AT CAFE DES PHA
Photograph

Jean Jones

OUT OF THE STORM

Out of the storm come only good things
Or at least,
Beautiful to the human eye
From a distance
This is what we believe, or would like to believe
In a world small, yet vast
Where the purple waterspout on the horizon
Matches the purple
Around the eyes
Of the dead girl...
Her face and body the same
As her rapist remembers
In all his dreams and nightmares...
This is not
What the couple in the white Mercedes sees.
They see the whirlwind descending in the horizon
An elephant lowering its trunk to the water
And they see the trunk as beautiful,
Far, far away in the distance...
They cannot see the fish being sucked up
In the vortex of the storm
Or the purple around the eyes
Of the dead girl
Buried in the sand
Her mouth in the perfect 'o' of a stifled scream.
No, the couple in the white Mercedes
Sees only the storm in the distance
And they conclude
That out of the storm
Come only good things
Or at least,
Beautiful
To the human eye from a distance

THE BIRDS OF DJAKARTA

I have the greatest
fear
watching the birds
fall

from your hands

listening
to your voice
on the phone:

Punctuated with pauses
uncertainties
about my
coming back

Why do those birds
fall from your hands
why?
Am I one of them?

An angel trapped
like the many angels
trapped

by the boys
riding the motorcycles
of Djakarta?

What brings
me
to you?

What brings
those pigeons

to those boys' hands
in Djakarta?

Something in the hands
surely, it must be that:
something
in the hands...

THE ANGEL OF DEATH SPEAKS TO THE PRIEST

"Well my darling, what do you believe now?"

"I don't know. I used to believe in something, in some
purpose,
but now... mass death, death with no meaning,
death as real as the sun shining, the sun setting, the
clouds
in the sky, the trees all around me...
Death as real as that."

"Do you want to know what that couple saw,
the ones who held hands as they jumped off that build-
ing?"

"I don't know. Blackness, flames, screams, a realization,
hands, screaming, falling, concrete... pain, black..."

"Just before they fell, they saw my face,
and I was all in white saying, 'Don't fear. Come to me.
Take my hand. Touch me. Hold each other's hand,
reach out, touch me.'"

"And what actually happened to them?"

"What you say, and what I've said: hot, black, screams, flying concrete, pain, and no pain, black, and my face all in white: 'Reach out,' I say, 'Reach out and I will take you with me.' And they did."

"And what happened after that?"

"That is not my prerogative. I am not the goal- I am the means to the goal. I take people where they want to go."

"What do they want? Where do they want to go?"

"Heaven, white light, tunnels, angels who understand, friends, family, a representative of God, fears, judgments, thrones, demons, pain, and agony..."

"And do they want this? Is it real? Is it in their head until oxygen to the brain stops, what?"

"They believe what they believe in their subconscious. What is in them will consume them: Hatred, malice, ignorance, envy, love, peace, and acceptance, bliss..."

"And you see all of it, don't you?"

"I see the faces who scream, and the faces who smile."

"And what do you see when you see me?"

"Someone who wants to believe, but cannot."

"What lies in store for me?"

"What is in your heart?"

"Love for my fellow human beings."

"You will find that. Come on, its time to go."

"Is it my turn now?"

"Why do you think I'm here?"

"What will happen?"

"You've answered that question already, haven't you?"

"What do you see in my face?"

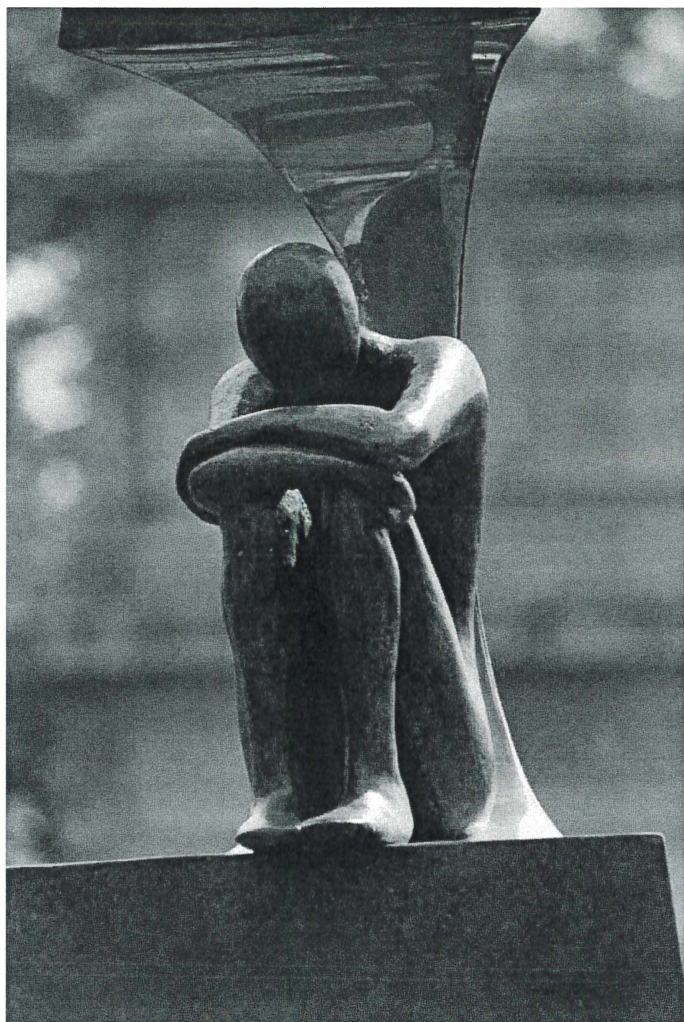
"A firmness, someone ready to face the unknown."

"And what will I see?"

"Look into my face. What do you see?"

"Beyond the darkness, my reflection."

"Come inside."



David Quillian

SOMBER
Black and White Photograph

Kimberly Neal

JANUARY SUNDAY

The kids were running all over again, laughing, tossing a ball back and forth, little girls screamed as they were chased.

"Someone is always screaming," the old Japanese man thought as he watched from the walkway that encircled the park, his lips pressed tightly but almost hidden amongst the wrinkles that covered his face. He clutched a clear grocery bag from Top World. The name which is written across one side of the bag in brown letters contained in a banner below, with a picture, also in brown, above it that could have been from New York in the 1920's due to the assortment of old clothes and hats, with laces and frills that the western looking people wore; He stood near a lamp post watching the children run across the faded yellow grass.

It was a January Sunday, easily recognized by the cold air that refused to billow white puffs from the noses and mouths of those gathered in the park. Sunday in Japan is hard to miss because all fathers and grandfathers finally have some free time to spend with the children. They watched carefully, enjoying the time away from never ending work, and most mothers were given a little break from their usual job of corralling the children. One little girl in black pigtails and jeans slipped backwards off her pink unicycle, briefly knocking the wind out of her, but soon she had gathered enough air in her lungs to loose a shrill cry as her father, already at her side, picked her up to comfort her. The clouds overhead scurried across the sun, letting its light reach out in scattered patterns that brought shadows crashing down onto those who stood and ran in the open clearing of the park as quickly as it brought the warmth of light.

The strobe like effect coupled with the screams and shouts brought memories of the ocean, crashing against the sand and shining on boots as soldiers jumped to and from the boats splashing and yelling commands. Gun shots whistled through the air, snagging thuds from trees and groans from men as leaves and blood littered the ground, mixing with the sand to form a paste that stuck to everything. The thunder of bombs exploding brought adrenaline and fear rushing through the veins. Shadows could always mean eternal darkness looming closer.

The pigtailed girl's arms waved as she struggled for balance once more on her unicycle a few meters away. The old man straightened his winter knit cap and zipped his coat up a bit more.

"Eighty-eight years old tomorrow and all I've done in the past decade is settle in Hirakata, far from the bullets and bombs, but never away from the screams or memories," he thought to himself as he walked around the edge of the park that had been built in the last year, big enough to be designated an earthquake evacuation site and only a few streets from the small house he had settled into.

The little girl suddenly whizzed by on her unicycle, a bit wobbly and arms outstretched for balance, but she had surely discovered the trick to the wheel. She carefully turned several meters ahead and stopped without falling. She smiled and giggled as her father ran over and brought her into a tight embrace.

"As long as the innocent smiles and laughter win out over the terrified screams and memories, I guess it wasn't worthless," thought the old man as he walked his even, moderate pace, with only a slight limp, back to his home.

Jan Pratt

(Tanka)

Rain will fall
pushing corn stalks from hiding.
people will be fed.

hunger has left
people will live.

HER BLOOD

Her blood boils red
inside her tight fitting
olive colored skin.

To be in her
 growing, feeding on her blood
icy arms embrace her organs.

(Haiku)

forgotten bodies
foreign maggots decompose
forgotten Jack.

Cataline Ramirez

DEATH IN HIS HANDS

Montezuma lay
Gifts before him;
Opened insatiable greed!
Cortez had seen pearls gleam
Smelled honey
In gluttonous glee

With bloodied temples
He tried to excuse
Reasoning behind
The extermination of pride first,
Life later.

Then his own holy
Pack of conquistadors
Could grab gold
Could bag emeralds
Could enter the holy places
And put in them
A statue
Of our Lady and the Saints

Our Lady looking down at
The perishing beauty of
Gautemotzin



Tasha Mehne

TRATTORIA LIGHTS-FLORENCE
Photograph

Parrish Ravelli

SUMMERTIME

there are books on shelves
with miles between them

with space for my ego to construct itself
just shy
of a romantic

there are lines that divide
and that run into one another

train tracks, or headlights
just missing each other

to what name do I give a rose
none but that which is its own

romance

and myself just a spectator
between lines and chapters

sitting on shelves, overlooking trains
just missing each other

and beneath your covers
there are no thorns

just romance

DRY NIGHTS

there were once nights
as there were days sleepless

in the contempt of rain
I used to sit

as a summertime boy
while raindrops kept me from the world.

then there were stories
from my father

of mountainsides
and kings.

pirates and princes,
both of which we had descended.

there was one story
of a great battle he had fought in

with ships and cannons
prisoners & allies

both of which
we had descended.
lasted for years
and books were written.

after that he never left again
and there weren't any more fights

just him and I
dry days and dry nights.

THESE STREETS

the moonlight on 5th street
is blushing because we just

figured out what it
was trying to say.

strung out from all those
tearful nights...

there are revolutions
in your eyes

with trails of light
that reach across your face

come le stelle charismatic.

the moonlight on 6th street
is drunk on the concrete

and can not hide a thing.
it snuck into the church

on the corner, through the stained glass
and spilled out at our feet.

tonight let's dance
with our senses of touch

and let the politicians
talk about tomorrow.

whether or not
these moonlit streets come alive

we will move
with grace rather than sorrow.

Ciara Seaborn

HUEY P. NEWTON: FIGHTING IN IRAQ

The sounds of the bombs
Over the commanders' call
Traumatize my ears
Afraid of the outcome of my fate, I looked to find him
standing there
Equipped with guns and bullets, fully dressed in black
I thought: We could surely die
This exceptional man and I
Co-fonder of a revolution, he was indeed a fighter
I dodged the bombs thrown my way, but he stood tall
"Why bother?"
I pull him down beside me, begging him to fight and
stay alive
I beg him to use his guns and bullets, he does not
oblige
Dead limbs furnish the ground, and cries of agony
resound
Blank Panther Leader, this powerful keeper, lays his
gun down
I cannot stop him; he marches forward into chaos and
out of my reach
"My fear was not of death itself. But a death without
meaning."



J. A. W. Schroeter

CANDLES ON THE GRAVES
Antique Photograph

J. A. W. Schroeter

ENTOMBED

I hope that it is merely the rash, inquisitive nature of youth that bids you to ask me of that great horror of horrors that to this day invades my solemn slumber and robs me of any true contentment, and not the driving of some morbid love of the grotesque. If it is curiosity, perhaps you may learn something of the wicked ways of war and its brutal, blind fist falls. But if it is the grotesque you seek, it shall sicken me to no end to know that a chronicle of my torments would satisfy the dark hunger that would drive you.

My name is Alexander Hickman. I was born in the spring of 1897 in the small Pennsylvania town of Somerset. The story of my family and life before the war is a simple one that any rural farm boy could tell you, so I will not bore you with its details. I was raised with the values of patriotism and service, which had no small part in my heeding of the nation's call in 1917. I was twenty years old when I signed on to help old Black Jack Pershing crusade against the shadow of the Hun and make the world safe for democracy. It is hard for me to recall anymore if at the time I truly believed in these romanticized fantasies, or if I was merely caught up in the excitement of war and glory. Perhaps I merely needed an excuse to leave my simple farming life. No matter the reason I went, I would gladly trade everything I've ever owned or loved to take that decision back.

My military training was quick and intensive. The demand for fresh American soldiers did not facilitate a slow pace, and before I knew it, our training was 'done,' though there is no training that could have ever

prepared me for the things that awaited me in those trenches. Within weeks we were herded onto over-filled troop trains, past crowds of cheering people and playing bands, past women waving handkerchiefs and saying goodbye to loved ones. Children were saying goodbye to fathers, and old men carried a look of jealousy in their eyes because they could not go with us. The trains carried us off to the coast where we left our crowded troop cars for more densely crowded ships, and more cheering crowds. After a week and a half of seasickness and cramped quarters we arrived in France. It was strange. We were greeted in the same manner as when we had left home, by screaming crowds. I tell you though; it was not jealousy that filled their eyes as we walked past them on our way to the front, but a deep weariness, compiled with sadness and gloom. These were the eyes of people that have seen more hardships and troubles most think it is possible to bear. It is a look I've come to know all too well, as I see it now every day when I pass a mirror or catch my reflection in a storefront window.

It was very quickly after our arrival that we were rushed to the front. As I have said, the need for American troops was great, with the recent exit of Russia from the war, and the French army in a state of mutinous upheaval. We were the only hopes for stopping the advances of the German army. The horrors of life at the front often spoken of in books and memoirs are no exaggeration. The battlefield was a cruel and vile place. Unburied dead were lying about; bodies torn apart and left for the rats, or used for fill in the trenches. Some of us used to find it funny to hang our canteens from protruding limbs, or not think twice about using a former comrade's body to keep our feet out of the mud. Ever present was the din of the constant bombardment of artillery from both sides, a noise that becomes frighteningly commonplace over time. Modern

warfare has a strange effect on men. Some, with time, can come to handle the brutal carnage and visceral framework of the trenches, while others let it slowly consume them until they can bear it no more and waste away into blithering, huddled masses. Others can believe that they have attained immunity to its horrors but all the while their mind is merely waiting for the correct trigger to tear itself apart.

It was there on the battlefields of France that I came to the event that was to be my undoing. It was during the great German offensive in the spring of 1918. By that time I had been in the line for nearly a year and had become hardened to the brutalities of the battlefield, or so I had thought. We had been under heavy bombardment for days before the German surge forward pushed our entire segment of the line into a full fighting retreat. It is impossible to say that our fallback was anything more than chaos in its truest form: running through the shell-shattered, body-choked trenches and across the open crater filled landscape of no-mans-land. The air was alive with the whizzing bullets of machine gun fire and flying debris from the rain of artillery rounds, throwing up geysers of dirt and burning shrapnel.

Through the dust and din of our chaotic retreat, I and a fellow private, -a young able-bodied man named Thompson-, became lost in the tangle of mud-filled craters and whizzing death. With no clear sight of any other members of our unit and audible means of location being completely useless, my partner and I continued to move roughly in the direction we believed to be away from the enemy advance. Crawling through the mud, the blood, twisted pieces of shrapnel and broken barbed wire, we managed to work our way to a small rise. We pulled ourselves over, seeking to find shelter on its far side. Upon climbing over the top we found that it was not a rise at all but the rest of a deeply

sunken road that worked nicely as a natural trench. Unfortunately we still could find none of our company or any other unit in our line of vision. As I fumbled in my ammunition pouches to reload my rifle, Thompson pulled on my sleeve and motioned with his hand towards a small wreck of a building that stood some fifty yards up the road from us. From what I could make out of the structure from where we sat huddled against the wall of the road, it had at one time been some kind of farmhouse or cottage. Now it had collapsed in upon itself from at least more than one direct artillery hit. Thompson shouted to me over the roar of the battle that he believed some of our company mates could be using the building for shelter, and that we should try to make our way towards it to make sure. I agreed with him and we began to move along the sunken road keeping low under its crest. As we drew closer to the structure it became clearer to me that it had incurred more than just a few shell hits. Its stone walls and remaining wooden fixtures had been marred with hundreds of bullet holes and ricochet scars, and the wood showed signs of scorch marks and burning. Thompson and I climbed back out of the road and began to crawl prone against the muddy earth until we came to the foundation of the building. To our fortune, the wall facing the road had collapsed outward from a shell impact, allowing us to drop directly into the cellar of the building without having to expose ourselves to the onslaught of the open battlefield looking for another way in.

The cellar was deep, as me and my companion found when we jumped blindly into it, and were greeted by an over eight-foot drop. Our feet were met by several inches of standing water, and our nostrils wrinkled at the dank mildewed stench that permeated the slimy stone walls. The cellar was a cluttered mess of broken furniture and moldy piles of books and papers. Though

the upper portions had been almost completely blown off, the cellar was mostly covered by the remnants of the floor above it. In the corner on the far wall was a sturdy wooden door, closed, and I assumed, leading to a wine cellar or small closet of some kind. On the opposite corner was a rickety set of wooden stairs partially destroyed but still capable of allowing us to climb to the upper floor should we need to. However, there were none of our comrades in the tangle of stagnant smelly water and broken furniture fragments, either living or dead. Outside, we could still hear the crashing of the shells all round the structure. Their impacts shook the crumbling stone walls and a fine choking dust descended upon us from the remaining upper floor. Finding the cellar empty of our intended quarry we began to slosh our way toward the rickety stairs at the far end from us.

It was then that, over the rumble of landing artillery and machine gun rattle, I happened to hear a faint crash from behind the closed wooden door in the corner, as if something large had fallen from a shelf and splashed into the water on the floor. I stopped in my tracks and looked directly at the door. Thompson stopped with me. I told him of the noise and that it might be one of our men in the next room, or possibly a German scout. In any case it was something I felt worthy of investigation. Though to this day, I despise my persistence.

Through the rain of dust and ankle deep water I sloshed to the door and leaned in closely to hear if there were any more noises from within the next room, but I heard nothing save for the noises outside. For a moment I considered the possibility that I had merely imagined the noise or that a blast from outside had rattled something off of a shelf, but dismissed them. Thompson stood poised behind me as I placed my hand on the carved wood handle,

rifle at ready in case it was indeed a German scout. I tested the door slightly to see if it was locked or jammed in any way and found that it was quite loose and unobstructed in its swing. With one pull, I opened it wide, Thompson and me holding our breath collectively.

I have told you before that I had believed myself to be hardened to the rigors of modern warfare, but I will tell you now that my assurance was merely an illusion, and that nothing, save the cold indifference of a mass murderer, could have hardened me to the sight that was presented to me in that tiny root cellar behind that dreadful wooden door. The room itself was only about seven-feet deep and four-feet wide, lined with deep shelves that held duty boxes. The ceiling was partially caved in, giving light from outside, and the wood itself was charred and splintered. It was obvious that a shell had partially exploded directly above the room. As I opened the door a large rat jumped from one of the shelves onto the waterlogged floor, splashing about with a great clatter before it scurried out quickly between my legs. Thompson jumped and nearly fired his rifle but held his finger. However it was not the shattered apertures of the room or the rat that caused my throat to tighten and my stomach to heave.

Huddled in the center of the room, partly leaning on the broken boxes and disheveled shelves were the torn bodies of a young man and woman, and an infant child. What was left of their clothes seemed to mark them as common country folk. What they had been doing still in the zone of combat has always remained a mystery to me, but it is quite clear that they had hoped to escape the bombardment in this tiny room. How long they had been there I will never know. Knowing that the barrage had been upheld for close to a week and given the state of the bodies I could only

assume they had been killed in the opening hours. The man sat decaying against the shelves to the right of the room, the skin on his cheek beginning to sheer off his face under the weight and decay of his own body. His eyes were still open, cold and flat in a stone gaze of death. His skin was a sickeningly off shade of slug white, bloodless and stained with an onset of green mold. His stomach had bloated and burst, his rotting intestine splayed across the floor, floating on the surface of the water that filled this room as well. Through his neck was a large splinter of shrapnel, the obvious cause of death. Next to him lay his wife, on her back with her head gaping open, her brains splattered out through the side of her skull and painted on the shelf and wall. The look of shock was still frozen on her face, eyes wide and mouth gaping, as if the blast that had blown her crown open had just occurred. Her intestine also spilled onto the floor and mixed with her husband's. But the worst of the three was the black bloated body of the infant that lay cradled in the mire of rotting organs and stagnant water. Its little eyes were swelled tightly shut and its tiny fingers bulged. My horror was truly realized as I noticed that there appeared to be no wounds on the child of any kind; that the infant very likely survived the explosion that sent its parents to the next world, and that its own mode of death most likely came through starvation. The bodies teemed with the rhythmic crawling of insects, big black roaches that crawled in and out of open mouths, and across unblinking eyes. A small cloud of black flies buzzed around them.

I don't know how long I stood in that cursed doorway assessing the state of the dead family, but it seemed as though my feet had become rooted to that flooded cellar floor. That stench that wafted from the room was beyond description, save anyone who has smelled such a smothering vileness before. Behind me, Thompson emptied his stomach onto the cellar floor

with a resounding splash. Sometimes I wonder whether if I had left at that moment, that if I had turned away and walked up the stairs that that terrible sight in the cellar would not have effected me so, that fate would have somehow been merciful and I would have been able to forget that horrible vision before me. But fate is not merciful, and as I started to close that terrible wooden door, I did not hear the wild screech of the shell that came careening through the destroyed upper levels and exploded on the floor above us. The blast killed Thompson immediately and blew me into that grotesque room, blowing the door closed behind me, which caved in further from the weight of the collapsing upper floor. The blast had severely rattled me and I was not sure where I was at first as I attempted to pull myself up from the intestinal muck that I had been thrown forward into. I quickly managed to gather my bearing from the thin rays of light that poked their way through the wreckage around me.

The room's size had been greatly diminished by the collapse from the explosion and I could barely stand up in the tight crevice. I was now forced literally to come face to face with the rotting corpses. Believing initially that Thompson might still be alive I began to yell for his aid, but after a time I came to the realization that he was very likely killed in the blast. For hours I beat on the wooden shelves and tried to push the rubble from the small holes that provided light, but the weight of the debris was simply too much to push from underneath. I yelled in the vain hope that someone would hear my cries but I could still hear the pounding of the guns from outside and knew that no one would be able to hear me unless they stood right on top of my shell made tomb, and even then they might not.

I sat in the rancid water and was silent for a time, under the steady gaze of my ghastly tomb-mates; Their

harsh unflinching eyes seemed to peer through me, as if to study me in my experimental escape efforts. As night came, the thin tendrils of sunlight faded to the murky blue of the moon, casting strange shadows over the family's putrid flesh. It's strange how fear and fatigue can play tricks on the mind. In that cramped sarcophagus, through the thing rays of moonlight, I can still swear that I saw those poor corpses move, ever so slightly, as if they still meant to shelter themselves and their child from the impending doom of a shell blast. Or as if to mouth their last words to me, to tell me their names before I too sank into the gut-filled soup I wallowed in.

Days passed. I could not pry my eyes from my dead companions. In my mind I began to form countless wild and grotesque fantasies that rattled apart my rational brain and erected in its place a haven of absurd blasphemies. I began to come to terrible fears in that moldy insect infested crypt that would haunt me forever more. I sat huddled before the unblinking eyes of those dead people and imagined in their dull eyes a twinkle of satisfaction, their gaze looking deep into me as if they knew that I would soon join them, and they seemed pleased about it. I could not bring myself to tilt their heads away from me. I did not want to come close to them, let alone touch them. I cowered as far from the wretched family as the tiny bubble in the wreckage would allow. I imagined that if I were to turn away from those corpses even for a moment they would reach out their dead arms to grab at my clothing and drown me in the putrid mire of rotting guts. I sat and stared at them for days, afraid to sleep, afraid to look away, even afraid to swat at the constant crawling of the roaches and flies that pricked at my skin. In my tired shattering mind I tried to recall what grievous, unforgivable sin I had committed to be damned to such a torment. Or even that I had indeed been killed in that

terrible blast that sent my companion to his grave as well. And that I was, in fact, in hell at that very moment, in my own custom made chamber of horrors, paying for some unremembered transgression. All these things my mind set in upon itself with, and I could merely hunch in terror at the mad ramblings of my own design. I lived on the small amount of dry rations I had in my side bag, but they quickly ran out. Outside I could still hear the constant bombardment, and slowly came to the conclusion that if I was not already in hell, then this crypt would be my vessel on the river Styx, and I would be docking very soon. This buried and forgotten cellar with its grisly company and dark delusions would be where I would finish out my enlistment.

Until, through the rumble of artillery and clatter of my own gloomy introspection, I heard the faint words of someone shouting. For a moment I thought it was a morbid trick of my own imagination, a sick trick of my own delusional hope. But as I sat there frozen in the shattered room I could distinctly hear the voices of men shouting in English. I wildly screamed and beat my sore hands against the door and shelves, anything that would make noise. And to my great adulation was heard. The group that found me was an advanced company of light machine gunners whom had hoped to use the ruins of the house for cover in a defensive outpost, and by sheer luck, had heard my desperate cries from within the rubble. Within an hour they had pulled away the large segments of flooring that had sealed my horrid tomb and delivered me, finally, gasping and shrieking, from that putrid pit.

That was sharply the end of my combat experience in Europe. I would never return to my unit, but would be told later in the hospital that their withdrawal from the front had been successful. I was taken to a military hospital in Paris and, though they found that there was

nothing physically wrong with me, they did render a diagnosis for the strangeness of my mannerisms, my terrible jumpiness and unease, my intense panic at the presence of musty and dank odors, and my terrible fits of shrieking and writhing in the night. Modern physicians since have attempted to sanitize the title of the condition that has forever plagued me, adding more syllables and bigger words, inventing new phrases like battle fatigue and post-traumatic stress disorder. But no matter how they try to change its name, it is still the same cruel affliction, and I can think of no better name for it than the one that was written across my medical papers in bold black ink- "Shellshock."

My return to the States was not nearly as impressive as the grand parades that awaited my unscathed and victorious brethren upon their arrival. Mine was a mental wound, more forgotten than the casualties of the flesh. I was a casualty of the mind, and there would be no parades in our honor. I never could adapt to civilian life. And my struggle through this world has been a long and agonizing one, full of failure and disheartenment, and a constant regression into fits of hysteria and delusion, causing for more than one internment in an asylum. Though I have often considered alleviation through the bullet or quick poison, I have never been able to bring myself to it. I have always considered suicide the coward's way. I have grown to deal with my problem if through nothing else than sheer perseverance.

So there it is for you, the horrid force behind my crippling phobias, the reason why, to this day, I still cannot bring myself to enter any part of a building that would be considered a cellar, and panic at the very trace of moldy dank air. Why my bedroom windows are lined with the thickest black drapes to keep even the slightest threads of moonlight at bay, because in

those thin streams of blue light I can still see the vacant gazes and maggot-white flesh of those poor, nameless wretches. And why in my fits of fearful sleep I awake to find a brainless mother, holding her black bloated baby at the foot of my bed, with her organs splayed across my sheets, and a crawling, rotted father clutching at my fear frozen legs, finally come to drag me down into the dark abyssal depths of death that I escaped in that cellar room.

Of all the things I ever encountered in that vast inside-out graveyard we called a battlefield, none has affected me so as those three blasted corpses. Of the thousands of dead enemies and the tens of thousands of dead comrades, it is still those three that ever linger. And if your curiosity is now satisfied I will ask you not to press me again for any tales of my time in the line, for like those three poor, mangled corpses I wish to leave those events, now and forever, entombed.



Lindsay Wolcott

THE SENTINEL
Oil on Canvas

Mathew Stucke

EXTINCTION

Aquatic creatures trapped
for their own good. We maintain a
haven safe from extinction.
Manmade, progress fueled, toxic waste, suburban sky-
scraper, patriotic duty, necessary
extinction.

Croatalus horridus' head above
a coiled hidden labyrinth. Found objects produce syn-
thetic habitat.
Organic thoughts of misplaced confines.
Beast of land now
wet with context.

Hippocampus erectus confused
enigma of existence. A figment of fiction perhaps.
What god would be so cruel? The god of the marble
fudged feline
fish perhaps.

Ondontapis taurus billows forward
never backward. Rewind history to illuminate
the murky waste receptor of the sea. Virgil
explains the need, devourer of disease.

I know why the caged osprey sings.
Rap tap tap, the childish otter pleads
to be plump as a middle-class American.
A donation to capture more images of extinction
please?

Mason Tate

GEOGRAPHY

i wake reaching
for you, speaking
to you, surprised
at my inability
to locate you
in the darkness

he said: *why*
cling to the
geography of love?
but i am finding it
impossible not to
as you are
five thousand,
sixty-one miles
away
and geography
is as close
to proximity
as we have.

COUP D'ÉTAT

only the twenty
(or so)
raindrops
that make it
to the floor
of the
 Pantheon
can know the
 satisfaction
that i do
having snuck
my way
into your
 heart

BANISHMENT

Muenchen to Praha:
the conductor
 demanding
our *fahrkarten*
and we, too young
not to smile.
exiled to these
 tacky
 teal
 second-class
compartments we,
in the awkward quiet
amid strangers,
attempt to compartmentalize:
our travels
our lovers
our lives

Emily Threlkeld

(Choka)

From bed she can see
The tree outside her window
Shedding its dead leaves
The branches becoming bare
Under her covers
She's warm though the room is cold
Soon she must arise
Slip on her coat, tie her scarf
Face the bitter winter air

Kenny Walker

ROLL THE BONES

You are
We are
All are

Nothing but a sack of bones
Full of shit
And rotting viscera.

So come on cocksucker.
Roll the bones.
Throw those pearly white beauties
And see what happens.

Someday, though,
The house will win.
The house always wins.

TO MY MUSE, WHEREVER SHE'S GONE

Now you're gone-
And I always catch glimpses
Of you in dingy restaurants
With ratty-looking punks

Who only want a handjob
Underneath the table
Or a one-night stand
In smoke-filled motels.

Fickle bitch-
I still remember
Long nights tangled together
Lost in each other.

I thought for sure
That if it were to end
I would be the one
Who called it off.

PONDER, FOR A MOMENT,
THE DUNG BEETLE

When I was younger
Everyone would ask me
What I wanted to be
When I grew up.

"A dung beetle,"
I would tell them
In all seriousness.

"What? Why not
An astronaut?
Or a paleontologist?"

I just figured
Everyone deals with shit.
I may as well
Make a living off of it.

Mike Williams

HOSPITALS

The hospital walls smell like sick
Sick which smells like shit
Or piss

The patients all walking or sitting
But not like a normal person walks
Or sits

They share rooms and doctors
And they're within 3 feet of each other
But alone

Even when their family comes
To visit and say goodbye
They're alone

Terrell Wood

NOVEMBER

Snow falls to the ground
as my thoughts fall to you.

I pick up a handful
and let it melt.

I'm tired of thinking about you.



David Quillin

SA GHARDÍN
Black and White Photograph

Cam Abernathy

Peggy Anderson

Al Bandi

Ian Burkett

Sara Jean Deegan

Edwin Farrell

Marie Gilbert

Sherry Hamby

Carrleigh Horvath

Caitlin Johnson

Jennifer Johnson

Jean Jones

Tasha Mehne

Kimberly Neal

Ian Pratt

David Quillin

Catalina Ramirez

Parrish Ravelli

Ciara Seaborn

J.A.W. Schroeter

Mathew Stucke

Mason Tate

Emily Threlkeld

Kenny Walker

Lindsay Wolcott

Terrell Wood

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2007